



U.S. Department of Justice

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NEWS RELEASE

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Former Director of Program to Assist High-Crime Communities
Sentenced to Prison for Misuse of Funds and Bank Fraud

David E. O'Meilia, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Oklahoma, announced today that the former local director of a Justice Department program to assist communities in high-crime areas was sentenced to federal prison yesterday.

Pat Paige, age 48, former Director of the Weed and Seed Program in Lawton, Oklahoma, was sentenced to 12 months and one day on each of thirteen counts to run concurrently. Additionally, she is to pay restitution of \$37,825 (\$15,331 to the U.S. Department of Justice and \$22,494 to Arvest Bank of Lawton). Paige is to report to a designated federal correctional facility to begin serving her sentence on August 27, 2008. Following her release from prison she will serve a three year period of supervision.

Paige was found guilty in a jury trial on November 16, 2007, in federal court for the Western District of Oklahoma in Oklahoma City, on charges of wire fraud, false statements to the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, false statements to a financial institution, and money laundering. O'Meilia stated that his office had accepted responsibility for the case after the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Oklahoma had recused because of its official relationship with the Lawton Weed & Seed site.

Paige's criminal conduct related to her management of the Lawton Outreach Center which had received \$600,000 in Weed & Seed grant funds over a three year period. Weed & Seed is a U.S. Department of Justice program designed to assist designated high-crime neighborhoods to "weed" out the criminal element and "seed" the area with social programs to assist the community. The Lawton Outreach Center was established as a nonprofit charitable corporation organized to administer the Lawton Weed & Seed program in the

Lawton View and Sheridan neighborhoods. Paige diverted grant monies to pay for personal expenses she had made on the Lawton Outreach Center's credit card. Additionally, Paige made false reports to the Office of Justice Programs concerning the amount of unobligated grant funds that remained available for the Weed & Seed program. Paige also presented fraudulent documents to a Lawton bank which falsely stated she was authorized to obtain a loan for the Lawton Outreach Center and pledge the assets of the nonprofit charitable organization as collateral.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney O'Meilia stated, "The United States Department of Justice is committed to ensuring that taxpayer dollars used to fund federal grant programs are utilized for the specified and appropriate purpose only, in every instance."

O'Meilia further commended the outstanding efforts of the Office of Inspector General for the Department of Justice and the FBI for investigating the matter. He also recognized the superlative efforts of Northern District of Oklahoma Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jeff Gallant and Joe Wilson in the prosecution of the case.